



Montgomery County Council

From the Office of Councilmember Michael Knapp

For Immediate Release

October 21, 2003

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COUNCILMEMBER KNAPP PROPOSES BILL TO MAKE COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE MORE EFFECTIVE IN POST 9/11 WORLD

Councilmember Michael Knapp today introduced legislation that would create a more unified command and control structure for the County Fire and Rescue Service, enhance the role of volunteers within the service, strengthen the service's management during emergencies, and increase readiness for service personnel and equipment.

"Our Fire and Rescue Service has a long and glorious past, rooted in local fire companies and including both volunteer and career firefighters," said Councilmember Knapp, chair of the Council's Homeland Security Committee and lead councilmember for Fire and Rescue.

"In the wake of September 11 and Hurricane Isabel, we must create clear lines of authority ready, able, and willing to effectively respond to whatever challenge we may face. We need to amend our local law to bring us in sync with Homeland Security requirements on the federal and regional level.

"We want to make a superior County Fire and Rescue even better. We have to."

The legislation is co-sponsored by Council President Michael Subin and Councilmember George Leventhal.

"Our emergency response in this County is great," said Council President Subin. "But our emergency planning is clearly not as good as it could be – and we need a new way of going about the business of planning."

(more...)

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The legislation would:

- Create a Montgomery County Fire Rescue Service empowered to meet and exceed national and regional standards for incident management with clear lines of authority and responsibility through a unified command and control structure.
- Create a standardized incident management system and a fully integrated emergency command center.
- Enhance the position of the Chief of the Division of Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services to allow that position to have a clear role in the administration, recruitment, retention, and promotion of volunteer personnel and facilities.
- Enhance the “Length of Service Awards Program” to increase flexibility in eligibility for volunteer personnel.
- Provide additional incentives for volunteers such as an increase in the death benefit, use of County recreational facilities at reduced cost, and greater flexibility of tuition assistance-based programs.
- Create a mobile volunteer personnel corps reporting directly to the deputy chief for volunteer services.

“These changes would recognize the independence of local fire and rescue companies, increase accountability, give more incentives for volunteers, and help us better manage the challenges that face us in a post-9/11 world,” said Councilmember Knapp.

The Council will hold a public hearing on the legislation at 7 PM on Thursday, November 13.

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